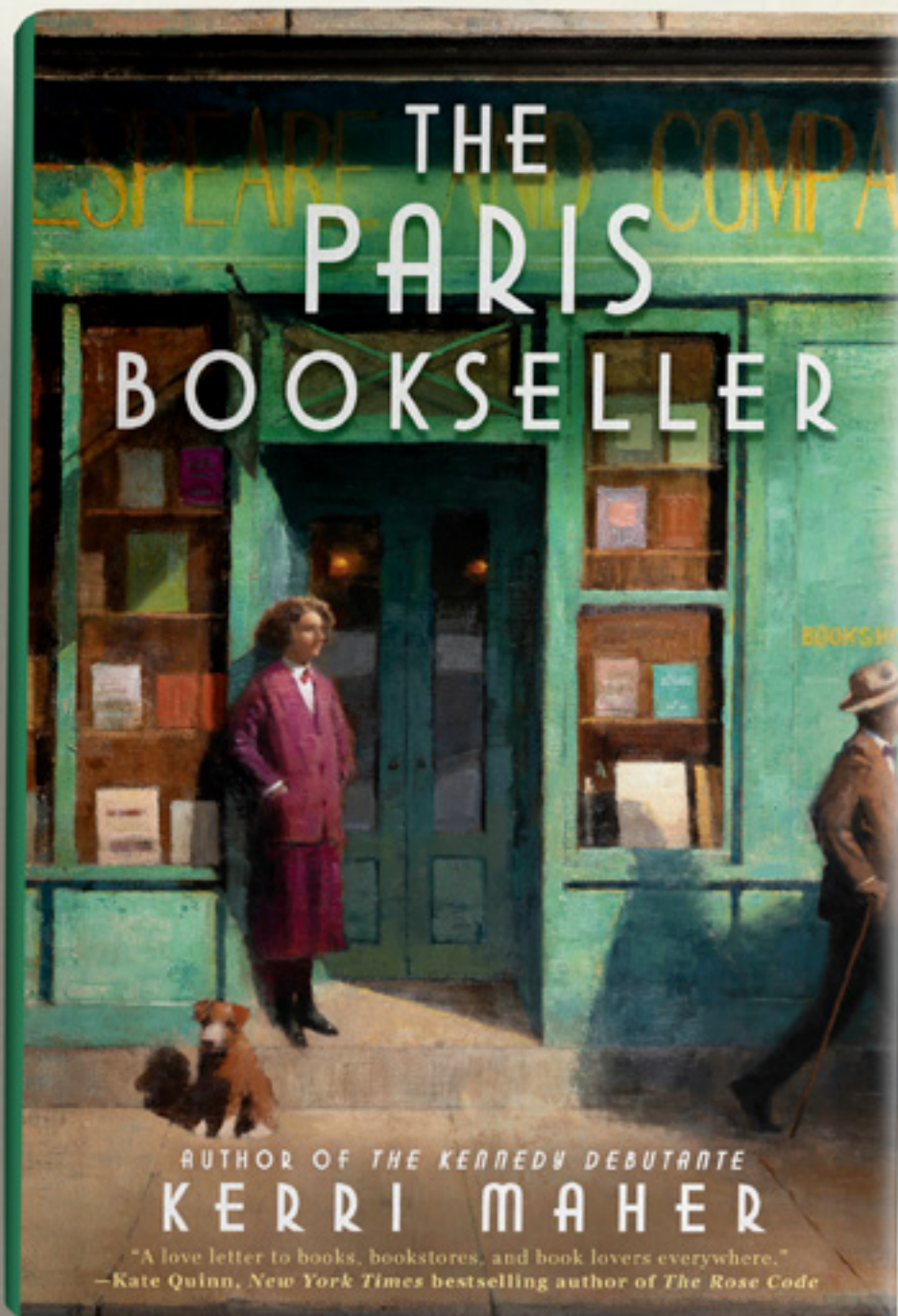

BOOK CLUB KIT



LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

When I was an undergraduate, I worked in the conservation department of my university's library, learning from the rare papers conservator to mend precious papers that were crumbling to confetti by mixing special glue and adding it to strips of delicate Japanese paper that acted as sutures. I even got to piece together some of Jack Kerouac's letters.

In part because of that experience, as soon as I graduated from college, I moved to New York City to work in museums—or so I thought. My parents told everyone I was moving to New York to become a writer. A hot minute into my summer internship and I knew that museums were not my world. My parents, surprise, surprise, had been right.

By September, I was employed as a clerk at the Community Bookstore of Park Slope, Brooklyn, with hours that gave me the freedom to write every morning. Though that schedule was important for getting my first (unpublished) novel written, working at the bookstore proved more important. For hours a day, we aspiring writers on the staff talked among ourselves and with the customers about our own work as well as the novels we were reading and what we'd learned from them; we argued about whether Dave Eggers's first book really was a heartbreaking work of staggering genius; we shared connections and ideas and suggestions and heartaches.

We were, essentially, like the young, hungry writers who first came to Sylvia Beach's bookstore Shakespeare and Company in Paris in the early 1920s. A few years before, I'd read Sylvia's memoir and marveled at the richness and texture of her life. To be honest, I'd also been a little jealous: how I wished I, too, could live in Paris among my literary heroes, during my favorite decade!

So imagine my amazed glee when I got to do just that in writing *The Paris Bookseller*—

live Sylvia's life as much as anyone can, through the miraculous act of time travel that is writing historical fiction. Even better: I get to bring readers along for the ride.

Few people realize that Sylvia's Shakespeare and Company was as much library as store, and that she loved keeping records of what friends like Ernest Hemingway and Elizabeth Bishop borrowed. Not only that, but Sylvia's foray into publishing gave her an opportunity to create a book that was itself a work of art, the kind that would be a prize for any rare manuscripts collection. The first 150 copies she had printed of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922 used verge d'arches paper, and its cover was the blue of the Greek flag, just as Joyce requested.

I feel so lucky that I was able to bring two of my formative literary experiences—in a library and a bookstore—to *The Paris Bookseller*. My wish for this novel is that it transports readers to Shakespeare and Company and reminds them of the many reasons why bookstores and libraries matter: as meeting places of neighbors and artists, as loci of literary thought, and as support networks for the act of reading itself. I hope it inspires them to venture into their towns to get books from their local booksellers and librarians who, like Sylvia, take pride in placing exactly the right book into a patron's hand, changing their lives forever.

Kindest regards,

KERRI

CAST OF CHARACTERS

All of whom are real people

SYLVIA BEACH


Sylvia Beach was born in Maryland in 1887, though she lived most of the American portion of her life in Princeton, NJ. She traveled widely throughout her life, and Paris was her favorite city—it was there where she opened Shakespeare and Company on the Rue Dupuytren in 1917. She was petite and fast talking, loved wordplay, and chain-smoked. She loved books and writers, and her lifelong friend Ernest Hemingway famously said of her, “No one I ever knew was nicer to me.”

ADRIENNE MONNIER

Adrienne Monnier was born in 1892 and opened the bookstore and lending library La Maison des Amis des Livres in 1915, during the First World War. Not only was it the inspiration for Sylvia’s shop, it quickly became the leading bookstore of French intellectuals and artists, including Jean Cocteau, Jules Romains, and André Gide. She was Sylvia’s romantic partner for many years, and the two women lived together in Adrienne’s apartment for a decade and a half. She was an avid chef and gourmet as well as a voracious reader, writer, and editor, who, according to Sylvia, “was such an interesting person,” she wrote little of her in her own memoir because she was “afraid [Adrienne would] take over the whole show” (quote from Noel Riley Fitch’s biography of Sylvia, page 385).

JAMES JOYCE

James Joyce was an Irish writer who lived most of his adult life on the continent of Europe, mainly in Trieste and Paris. He was one of the most important writers of the Modernist movement, and a great lover of music, especially opera. As



Sylvia herself puts it in her memoir, “Languages apparently were Joyce’s favorite sport,” for he knew nine! He was a hard drinker as well as a prolific writer, and he stayed with one romantic partner, Nora Barnacle, his whole life—in fact, he memorialized their first date in *Ulysses*: June 16, 1904.

NORA JOYCE NÉE BARNACLE

Nora Joyce née Barnacle was James Joyce’s common-law wife for nearly two decades before they finally wed for legal purposes in 1931. Together they had two children, Giorgio and Lucia, the latter of whom had mental health disorders that kept her in hospitals most of her life, which was a source of great pain for Nora. Joyce’s wife supported her children and husband throughout her life, though she rarely read any of Joyce’s writing herself.

EZRA POUND

Ezra Pound was one of the most important architects of Modernism. He was himself a poet whose oeuvre is still studied today, but his work as an editor and matchmaker between artists and patrons (like Joyce to his longtime English patron, Harriet Weaver) made some of the most essential works of twentieth-century literature possible. He was also a gifted carpenter and his home was full of furniture he’d made and painted.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Ernest Hemingway needs no introduction. Sylvia called him “My Best Customer” in her memoir, and indeed he was—not just because he was a ravenous reader, always needing books from Sylvia’s store and library, but because he supported writers and Shakespeare and Company in many other ways throughout his life.

MARGARET ANDERSON

Margaret Anderson, originally from Chicago, was the founder and editor of *The Little Review*, which published the leading voices of Modernism, as well as photographs by artists like Man Ray and Berenice Abbott. She, along with her partner, Jane Heap, stood trial for serializing *Ulysses* in 1917-1921. Her

own account of her adventures publishing *The Little Review* are recounted in charming detail in her memoir, *My Thirty Years' War*.

JANE HEAP

Jane Heap was Margaret Anderson's co-editor and romantic partner for many years. She wore a menswear suit much of the time, and wrote many essays defending *Ulysses* and other writing accused of obscenity. Of Joyce's novel, she asked the essential question, "But is it art?" To which she replied a resounding YES.

JOHN QUINN

John Quinn was the Irish-American lawyer who defended Anderson and Heap in the *Ulysses* trial of 1921. In addition to defending Modernist writing in court, he was a noted art collector, whose collection included seminal works by Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Matisse, which are now in art museums around the world. He was also one of the organizers of the Armory Show, the first comprehensive showing of modern art in America, at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York City in 1913.

SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY

Shakespeare and Company, Paris, has had three locations and two owners. Sylvia Beach owned and ran the first two locations at 9 rue Dupuytren and 12 rue de l'Odéon, respectively. Sylvia's store closed in 1941 and never reopened. American George Whitman opened the third location at 37 rue de la Bûcherie, across the Seine from Notre Dame Cathedral, in 1951, though its original name was Le Mistral. Sylvia was a patron of that store until her death in 1962. He changed the name to Shakespeare and Company in 1964, and his daughter, Sylvia Whitman, runs the store today.

ULYSSES

COCKTAIL PARTY CHEAT SHEET

Want to know some fun facts about Joyce's masterpiece to share at parties—even if you haven't read the novel? Read on...

Women shepherded the novel to publication: First, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap serialized early chapters in the American journal *The Little Review*. Harriet Weaver serialized it in her British journal, *The Egoist*; she also sent Joyce money as a patron for most of his career, without which he and his family would have starved. (I'm purposely leaving out some spoilers here, so you can better enjoy *The Paris Bookseller*!) Sylvia Beach published the first nine editions of the full *Ulysses* under the auspices of Shakespeare and Company.

The first copies of *Ulysses* appeared on Joyce's fortieth birthday on February 2, 1922. This February 2, 2022, is the novel's hundredth birthday.

The novel's main characters are Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom, and Gerty MacDowell, and the novel has scores of other colorful characters.

It's called *Ulysses* because its events are patterned on that of the original epic poem *The Odyssey* by Homer, who chronicles the adventures of Ulysses (the Roman name for Odysseus) on his way home after the Trojan War. For instance, titles of Joyce's chapters are named for characters in Homer's original, like "Telemachus," and "Circe," and events in those chapters are meant to recall what happens with those characters in *The Odyssey*.

The novel takes place over the course of a single day—June 16, 1904— but Joyce was adamant that the cover of the first editions be the blue of the Greek flag.

Bloomsday (June 16, 1904) is the day on which all the events of Joyce's novel take place, and the term was coined by Sylvia Beach in the mid-1920s. The choice of date was inspired not by Homer's epic poem but by Joyce's first date with life partner Nora Barnacle (on which they enjoyed some famously intimate moments). Bloomsday is now an international celebration of Joyce and literature.

Joyce wrote about 30 percent of the novel on the page proofs that came back from Sylvia's printer in Dijon, dramatically driving up printing costs. These days, when a writer gets page proofs from a publisher, they are only allowed to alter the text up to 10% or they will be charged to reset the type!

It took no fewer than TWELVE typists to help Sylvia translate Joyce's scribbles into legible text.

Although she frowned on the novel at the time of its publication, Virginia Woolf was deeply affected by Joyce's tour de force, especially his use of stream of consciousness interior monologue, creative use of punctuation, and frankness about the body—much of which she would use in her own later work. William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett, Henry Miller, and countless other modern masters are also indebted to Joyce's trailblazing novel.

**For more *Ulysses* trivia, you'll have to read *The Paris Bookseller!*
No spoilers here...**



A VIRTUAL TRIP TO BOHEMIAN PARIS

Start with some fortification. Treat yourself to a croissant and a café au lait from your favorite coffee shop, sit outside if at all possible, and imagine yourself at Café du Dôme, Hemingway's favorite haunt in Montparnasse, by opening your computer to [this page](#) and imagining you're dining in this crowd.

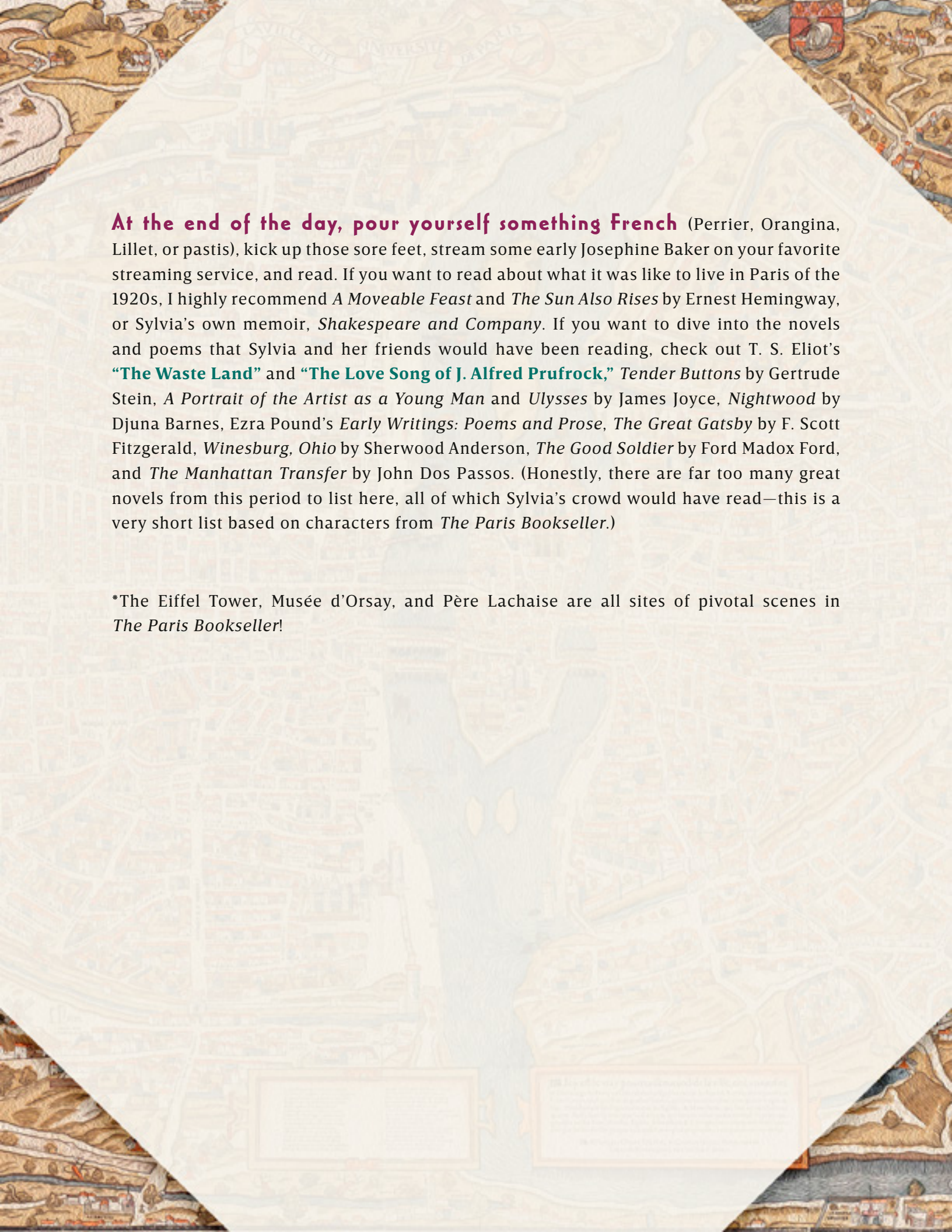
Drop by 12 rue de l'Odeon and say hello to Hem and Joyce. The [Shakespeare and Company Project](#) of Princeton University is as close as you can get to stopping by Sylvia's original shop. Look up what your favorite authors checked out of Shakespeare and Company—the Project has all of Sylvia's original library cards, and you can search for any writer from the period to see what books they checked out. You can even view the library card written in Sylvia's own hand!

View all of Paris from the Eiffel Tower*.

The tower's [fabulous website](#) offers 360° views from the top, and immersive pictures and videos from the second floor, first floor, and esplanade.

Take beautiful virtual tours of these landmarks of bohemian Paris:

- [Sacré-Coeur Basilica](#) in Montmartre
- [Musée d'Orsay](#)*, home of some of the most important Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings. Be sure to check out Manet's watershed [Olympia](#).
- [The Rodin Museum](#), which opened in 1919, the same year as Shakespeare and Company.
- [Père Lachaise Cemetery](#)*, where everyone who's anyone, from Balzac to Oscar Wilde to Jim Morrison, is buried—as well as Sylvia's own mother, Eleanor Beach.



At the end of the day, pour yourself something French (Perrier, Orangina, Lillet, or pastis), kick up those sore feet, stream some early Josephine Baker on your favorite streaming service, and read. If you want to read about what it was like to live in Paris of the 1920s, I highly recommend *A Moveable Feast* and *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway, or Sylvia's own memoir, *Shakespeare and Company*. If you want to dive into the novels and poems that Sylvia and her friends would have been reading, check out T. S. Eliot's "**The Waste Land**" and "**The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**," *Tender Buttons* by Gertrude Stein, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, Ezra Pound's *Early Writings: Poems and Prose*, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson, *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford, and *The Manhattan Transfer* by John Dos Passos. (Honestly, there are far too many great novels from this period to list here, all of which Sylvia's crowd would have read—this is a very short list based on characters from *The Paris Bookseller*.)

*The Eiffel Tower, Musée d'Orsay, and Père Lachaise are all sites of pivotal scenes in *The Paris Bookseller*!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Sylvia and Adrienne are devoted readers. How does reading shape their lives? How has reading shaped your life?
2. At first Sylvia is stymied by all the famous writers in Adrienne's store, but she goes on to open her own store and befriend the most famous writers of her day without being self-conscious about it. What do you think enabled her to call Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and the others her friends?
3. Adrienne and Sylvia disagree about how much time and energy Sylvia devotes to James Joyce. Why does Sylvia give so much of herself to the writer? Why does Adrienne disagree? How does this difference alter their relationship?
4. Sylvia risks her finances, her store, and her reputation to publish *Ulysses* because it's a book and a cause she believes in. Have you ever taken an enormous risk for something you believed in?
5. This novel is full of real-life strong women making history. Were any of their actions surprising to you, given the time period? Do you think there was something special about Paris at this particular time that made their actions possible?
6. Sylvia ruminates on the term *lost generation* on pages 237–38 and wonders if it applies to her. Do you think it does? What about to Adrienne, Joyce, or any of the other characters?
7. Sylvia calls her shop Shakespeare and Company. Discuss the second part of that name, *and Company*, and the way it arises as a theme throughout the book.

8. *The Paris Bookseller* takes place from 1917 to 1936, from the end of the First World War into the Depression, and it's being published one hundred years later. Did you detect any resonance with the twenty-first century as you read about the lives of these characters living a century ago? How are attitudes, laws, censorship, and art the same? How are they different?
9. *Ulysses* was an enormous achievement when it was published and continues to be one of the most celebrated books of English literature, though it's still considered a very difficult book to read. Have you read it? Did having read it—or not—alter your appreciation of what Sylvia and James Joyce went through in order to bring it out into the world?
10. Because of its difficulty, *Ulysses* is also one of those novels that people often “fake” having read or keep on their TBR lists forever. We all have books like this! What books have you pretended to read? What books seem to be stuck forever on your TBR list?
11. The original epic poem *The Odyssey*, by Homer—on which Joyce based his novel *Ulysses*—is about Odysseus trying to get home to Ithaca after the Trojan War so that he could be reunited with his wife, Penelope. In what ways do the themes of home and reunion pop up throughout *The Paris Bookseller*?
12. Many of us dream of owning a bookstore. If you owned one, what three authors—past or present—would you invite to read at your store?



KERRI MAHER

is the author of *The Girl in White Gloves*, *The Kennedy Debutante*, and, under the name Kerri Majors, *This Is Not a Writing Manual: Notes for the Young Writer in the Real World*. She holds an MFA from Columbia University and was a writing professor for many years. She now writes full-time and lives with her daughter and dog in a leafy suburb west of Boston, Massachusetts.
